

# Romeoville to welcome new Metra Station in early 2018

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ROMEDEVILLE – In the 1800s, a little village formed in the area of 135th Street and High Road.

It was known simply as “Romeo.”

Over time, this community expanded west of the Des Plaines River and incorporated as Romeoville in 1895, while much of the area surrounding High Road and nearby New Avenue remains unincorporated today.

These days, “Romeo” is on the edge of town, with the most notable landmarks being the river, the Isle a la Cache Museum and the CITGO refinery on 135th Street.

But in early 2018, a new landmark will be added to that list when Metra opens a station southwest of the 135th Street-New Avenue intersection in an area that currently is tucked away behind a tree line south of Citgo’s parking lots on the south side of 135th.

The train station will be the first new stop since 1984 on the Heritage Corridor Line, which goes from Chicago Union Station to Joliet, and the first new Metra stop in the Chicago region since 2011.

“This area is where the community started,” Mayor John Noak said, standing at the construction site. “I like to say that we’re going back to the area that we began.”

The project cost is estimated at \$4.9 million with more than \$3.9 million of it coming from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning’s Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Grant. Romeoville also received a supplemental grant from the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program for pedestrian access from 135th Street to the station.

There will be a paved roadway from 135th Street to the parking lot, which will have 123 parking spaces initially, with room to add hundreds more as demand increases.

CMAQ grants are awarded based on how many vehicles and emissions are taken off the roadways.

While Metra lines serving the western suburbs have more frequent service, there’s a chance additional service could be added to the Heritage Corridor at some point. There are three trains each day to and from Joliet to Chicago and vice versa, while trains to and from Chicago to Naperville and Aurora are offered sometimes twice an hour.

“This area with its growth really needs more access to public transit,” Noak said. “This line is really underused. It could really be a tremendous asset for the whole region. Additional service would benefit us, Lockport, Lemont and Joliet.”

Meanwhile, the southwest suburbs continue to expand and force more vehicle traffic onto Interstate 55.

“Once completed, this new station will mean more people in Romeoville and the surrounding area will be able to spend less of their valuable time each day driving on congested roads or traveling to less convenient Metra stations,” U.S Rep. Dan Lipinski, D-Willow Springs, said in a news release.

CITGO agreed to lease the land to the village for 99 years at \$1 a month. Though a call to CITGO seeking comment was not returned, Noak said the company identified it as a good opportunity to give back to the community.

Though Romeoville doesn’t have a historic downtown around the railway like neighbors Joliet, Lockport and Lemont do, the location offers the village some advantages.

“We don’t have the historic downtown, but that gives us opportunities as well,” Noak said. “That gives us flexibility on the parking and capacity.”

Romeoville plans to work with the Forest Preserve District of Will County to integrate a trail system into the site. That way, bicyclists get on and off the train in Romeoville and bike through the area.